





AN  
ANSWER

TO  
TWO LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO THE

LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE GEORGE CANNING

BY THE

REV. HENRY PHILPOTTS, D. D.,  
RECTOR OF STANHOPE,

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE

**Roman Catholic Claims.**

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SUBMITTED TO THE SERIOUS ATTENTION OF PERSONS WHO  
CONSCIENTIOUSLY RESIST THOSE CLAIMS,

BY

A CLERGYMAN OF THE CHURCH OF  
ENGLAND.

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# ANSWER

## TWO LETTERS

"The part a Member of the Commonwealth shall take in political contentions, the vote he shall give, the support he shall afford, or the opposition he shall make to any system of public measures, is as much a question of personal duty, as much concerns the conscience of the individual who deliberates, as the determination of any doubt which relates to the conduct of private life."

PALEY'S Preface to *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*.

TO THE

## REV. DR PHILPOTTS.

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SIR,

As the period approaches, when we may expect attempts to renew the sensation produced by your letters to the late Mr Canning, I avail myself of the present moment to address you on the subject of them, and to appeal to the religious feelings of the public in behalf of my Roman Catholic brethren. I have examined the matters contained in those letters with very minute attention, and the examination has convinced me, that, although written with much ingenuity and address, and with no inconsiderable display of learned research, they are utterly undeserving of the reputation and influence which they have acquired. The weakness of their pretensions may be easily exposed, by a brief analysis of some of their most formidable statements; and the cause of the Roman Catholics may be assisted by the suggestion of some considerations founded on a religious view of the subject. For these purposes I venture to take up my pen.

How far a minister of peace is righteously employed in raking together the polemical rubbish of former ages of bigotry and ignorance, at the risk of rekindling the flame of religious discord, and with a view to deprive five or six millions of his Christian brethren of their natural



rights, it is not my province to decide. But you evidently appear to have enjoyed your work, and to have performed it with considerable industry. With a mind originally, and, I have no doubt, honestly prepossessed against the Roman Catholic doctrines, you have lavishly explored every thing that is terrible or repulsive in the annals of Papacy, 'till,

“supped full with horrors,”

you have worked yourself into that state of alarm which sets all reasoning upon the subject at defiance. I have looked in vain throughout your pages, abounding in dogmas and doctrines, bulls and rescripts, extracts from writings of fanatical priests, and quotations from speeches of angry orators, for one solid fact demonstrating the danger of extending to the Roman Catholics all the privileges of the British Constitution.

You begin by an attack upon Mr Canning, and other eminent statesmen of similar views, for abandoning the securities they once held to be essential safeguards to the Protestant church. From this charge Mr Pitt is, singularly enough, exempted: for you have overlooked a material fact, namely, that Mr Pitt died in January 1806, seven years before any of his colleagues began to swerve from their original position, and nineteen years antecedent to Mr Canning's declarations in 1825. Had Mr Pitt continued to live, his opinions would probably have been equally changed, and by the same causes, as those of his survivors. To presume indeed, that the repeated discussion of this or any other question should be totally inoperative, is to rebel against reason. But in the present instance, such discussion has been eminently effective, as you yourself admit. Feelings of terror and mistrust towards our Roman Catholic brethren, have gradually given way to those of sympathy, confidence, and justice. An example of this change was exhibited in the most

able statesman of any age or country ; and the circumstance might have led you to suspect that your own fears were unfounded.—But it has only served to furnish you with an opportunity to exercise that talent for vituperation, in which, I lament to say, you so fondly and freely indulge.

Your charge against Mr Canning, however, is vehemently sustained throughout. You first examine the details of his bill of 1825 for the relief of the Roman Catholics ; and next, the substance of his speech on the introduction of it, both of which you censure with unsparing severity. This bill, it seems, neglected several of the securities provided by Mr Grattan's bill in 1813 ; which securities (consisting chiefly of oaths) you state at length, with particular comments on each, in order to expose Mr Canning's criminality for having omitted them. To support this charge, you have recourse to a mass of documentary evidence exhibiting the dangerous influence of the Roman Catholic Church, and the immoral principles of its members. And after thus showing, as you seem to conceive, the necessity for imposing on them a due proportion of oaths, you infer the guilt of failing to provide such securities. With every wish to investigate impartially the grounds of accusation against the eloquent advocate of the Catholic cause, I confess myself unable to discover their validity. Your zeal has, unfortunately for your arguments, betrayed your judgment ; and Mr Canning's inconsistency vanishes into nothing before that exhibited in your efforts to convict him.—It is plain to the most ordinary understanding, that, in proportion as the moral character of man is debased, the hope of binding him by the sanction of an oath must be fruitless. To require oaths from those who have no sense of their sacred obligation, is palpably absurd.—Yet, Sir, you have placed yourself in this predicament.—To establish a case against

Mr Canning, prudence might have suggested the necessity of leaving to your Roman Catholic brethren, a decent share of moral sense—some slight reverence for the Divine sanctions and appointments, be it ever so trifling.—Nay, even some little regard for their worldly reputation, might have been useful to your purpose.—But no !—The precaution seems to have been utterly neglected in your impetuous determination to expose Mr Canning, and to degrade the community whom he generously espoused.—This inconsistency, indeed, did not escape your penetration.—You evidently appear at one moment to have had some misgiving respecting it; and in order to extricate yourself, you call the grave authority of a Romish Ecclesiastic to your aid. But here again,—zeal has outrun discretion;—and the authority cited, only serves your purpose of exhibiting the Roman Catholics under a more hideous aspect, without assisting you to escape from your embarrassment.

Let me refer you to page 78, where you will find the following passage:—“ Almost every one who speaks  
 “ or writes on the side of the Roman Catholics, from  
 “ the gravest senator, down to the last speaker at a  
 “ tavern dinner, has been accustomed to triumph over  
 “ the gross absurdity of requiring oaths as a security  
 “ from Roman Catholics, whilst they are charged with  
 “ holding opinions subversive of the sanction of all oaths.  
 “ Father Walsh has shown to us that our ancestors  
 “ were not so foolish as these very wise persons are  
 “ pleased to imagine. He has told us, that there are  
 “ tenets which, by the indispensable condition of Ro-  
 “ man Catholic communion, may not be dissembled upon  
 “ oath, and that transubstantiation is one of them (as well,  
 “ I suppose, as every article of Pius the Fourth’s creed).  
 “ He has moreover told us that to another class of oaths,  
 “ the same sacredness of obligation does not belong :



“that to them, according to the doctrine of those missionary  
 “priests from Rome, equivocation and mental reservation  
 “may be very safely applied; and that this is *especially*  
 “the case with oaths of allegiance and supremacy taken  
 “to the King. I heartily congratulate you, Sir, on a dis-  
 “covery so honourable to the persons whose cause you  
 “support. But in saying this, permit me at the same  
 “time to say, that I have no doubt whatever, there are  
 “few of them in England half so bad as these their prin-  
 “ciples, if they continue to be their principles.—*But then*  
 “*I am sorry to add, this admission must be confined to*  
 “*England. Unfortunately, there is another country con-*  
 “*cerned, and he must be a bold man who would venture*  
 “*with equal readiness to answer for the mass of the Roman*  
 “*Catholic population, above all, of the Roman Catholic*  
 “*clergy, in that country.*”

Now, the extract from Father Walsh’s work, referred to in this passage, discloses a system of dissimulation, taught by certain missionary priests from Rome, to their disciples in these islands, so far back as *the middle of the seventeenth century*; and your purpose in producing it, as we have seen, is to fasten the crime involved in it on the Irish Roman Catholic population *of the present day*; without, however, even establishing it in the case of their forefathers. Father Walsh’s words, as quoted in page 77, are, “their missionaries, *i. e.* their priests, labour to in-  
 “fuse into all their penitents, all their own principles of  
 “equivocation, mental reservation in swearing,” &c. The term “labour,” to a charitable mind, might suggest a difficulty on the part of these missionaries, in effecting their purposes, even in that comparatively dark and distracted period. But to you, Sir, I am sorry to say, it is a matter of pleasure and exultation, to be enabled, by a forced interpretation and uncandid application of this fact, to brand five or six millions of Christians with an

eternal mark of infamy. You not only “thank Mr Canning for giving you an opportunity of citing the passage,” but you “heartily congratulate him,” in a tone of irony (not surely suitable to the subject), “on a discovery so “honourable to the persons whose cause he supports.” The feeble expression of your sorrow for your Irish brethren, but ill conceals the triumph of your spirit, when you thus sweepingly consign to detestation multitudes of a different profession from your own.

But, has Father Walsh relieved you from the charge of absurdity?—This will be ascertained by examining—whether the specific oaths omitted by Mr Canning, were such as, according to your own showing, the Roman Catholic church holds to be binding.

In page 48, you complain of the omission of the following clause in the bill of 1825:—“I do swear that I will “defend, to the utmost of my power, the settlement and arrangement of property within this realm, as established by “the laws.” And you say, in continuation, “it is a matter “in evidence before the committee of the House of Commons, that the descendants of the former owners of forfeited property in Ireland, extending to almost the whole “land, still keep alive the memory of their claims, and are “ready eagerly to avail themselves of any convulsion which “could give a hope of asserting them with success.”—What a mighty hold would the aforesaid oath possess over the consciences of men of such rapacious views as these, and so regardless, as you presume them to be, of the sanction of oaths affecting their interests! I have not seen, Sir, the evidence to which you allude, but I may be allowed to suspect its validity; while I challenge you to point out an instance during the convulsion of 1798, where the forfeited estates became notoriously the object of and prey to the insurgents—(the design cannot be of recent formation)—and pledge myself, in return, to pro-

duce the proofs of a case where *the property of an innocent Roman Catholic gentleman was plundered by, and the spoils divided among, loyal Protestants ; and these too in a superior station of life.*

In the next page, 49, we are told of another omission in the last bill. “ Again,” you say, “ the clause, ‘ I do declare solemnly before God, that I believe no act, in itself unjust or immoral, can ever be justified or excused by or under the pretence or colour that it was done either for the good of the church, or in obedience to any ecclesiastical power whatsoever : ’ ” as also, “ that it is not an article of the Catholic faith, neither am I thereby required to believe that I am bound to obey any order in its own nature immoral, though the Pope or any ecclesiastical power should issue or direct such order ; but, on the contrary, I hold that it would be sinful in me to pay any respect or obedience thereto. **ALL THIS IS OMITTED.**” These last words are printed in particular characters, to impress us more emphatically with the guilt of the omission.

Now, it is absolutely incredible, that with your avowed notions of the wicked purposes to which the discipline and doctrines of the Roman Catholic church are applied, you should ascribe the least value to such an oath.—It is an oath, binding or not. You have not made it appear to which class it belongs ; but no matter.—If it be binding, your motive for requiring it must evidently be founded on the persuasion that Roman Catholics can take it with a safe conscience (unless, indeed, you should intend it to operate as a bar to their enjoyment of office ; a thing inconceivable in a bill professing to be for their relief) ; and what then become of all your proofs and assertions respecting the immoral influence of their church, which they are here called on expressly and solemnly to disclaim ?—If it be *not* binding, how do you defend yourself against the



charge of absurdity, which you have treated with so much disdain?—This is a dilemma, Sir, from which there is no escape. If you suppose that a Roman Catholic can take this oath in good faith, the necessity for requiring it, is at an end; for it distinctly affirms that his creed does not incite nor allow him, to commit any immoral act, the very thing against which it is intended to provide.—You must either then disavow your belief in the dangerous and execrable power of the Pope, or you must submit to the imputation of absurdity for demanding such an oath from those who are prepared with an exemption from its obligation.

But assuming, as Mr Canning doubtless did, that Roman Catholics are actuated by the ordinary principles of Christian morality, there is surely nothing very extraordinary in his omission of this oath; nor is it very surprising that they should congratulate themselves on having overcome the fears which suggested such securities. The tender of such an oath cannot but insult men of common integrity. What would be the feeling of a Protestant, were he called upon to swear that he was not *a deliberate knave*, and that his church *was not an infernal engine of wickedness*?—Such is the purport of the present oath, for abandoning which, among others, you go near to denounce Mr Canning as a traitor to his country, and describe him as “submitting to the insolent domination of Roman Catholic demagogues,” and “as looking on while they “plucked out the heart of his own enterprise,” &c.

But let us mark the profound reasoning by which you endeavour to prove that the omission of this oath was a political crime on the part of Mr Canning. “And yet,” you add, “the history of the three last centuries proclaims to every one who thinks of history at all as something better than ‘an old almanack,’ that the mandates of nuncios, bishops, and priests, have repeatedly led on



“the people of that unhappy land (meaning Ireland, of course), to every deed of violence which men can commit.”

The most lively fancy could hardly have contrived a more ludicrous device, than the proposed oath, for the purpose of averting these tremendous evils. A few Roman Catholic gentlemen admitted to political power, swear that they do not believe themselves bound by the authority of the church, to perform any immoral act at its command;—and this is to be our security against the omnipotent influence of popes, prelates, and priests, over the mass of the Irish people! I am not prepared to say, Sir, with what degree of attention Mr Canning applied himself to the study of history; but I am very certain he might have learned even from an “old almanack,” that nuncios, bishops, and priests, are not the only powers that have led on the people of any country to acts of violence in defiance of laws, human and divine. I can myself testify that such acts were committed in Ireland by the Protestant army of a Protestant king, at the command of generals, colonels, and captains, all professing the Protestant faith. How far it might operate against similar violence, to require from each soldier in the service, an oath purporting that they did not believe themselves bound to obey any immoral command of their superiors, I leave to your discernment to discover.

It would be as tedious, however, to unravel all your inconsistencies, as you, Sir, state it to have been to trace the omissions in what, with a singular elegance of phraseology, you term “Mr Canning’s precious oath.” I refer your readers to your own pages, where they will find it easy to detect defects, similar to those already pointed out, in all those securities, for the omission of which Mr Canning is so severely censured, when they are considered in connection with the principles of the Roman Catholic church, *as expounded by yourself*.

I pass over a mass of various matters, evidently calculated to promote horror in the Protestants against Popery, and to keep alive the apprehensions that exist upon this subject. I must be content with noticing some of your most striking failures in establishing the conclusions at which you manifestly aim ; and if I am successful in showing that your mind has been so completely subjugated by its idle terrors of the doctrine and power of Papacy, as to have involved you in the most lamentable intricacies of reasoning, it will be readily granted that you can be neither a fair arbiter in the Roman Catholic cause, nor a safe guide of public opinion respecting it.

The first passage which I shall notice, occurs in your discussion of the doctrine of absolution, in reply to some of Mr Canning's observations upon that subject during his speech. After having expounded the doctrine as professed by the Roman Catholic church, you proceed to paint its effects in colours calculated to excite to the last degree our horror and detestation of them. In doing so, you seem to have exercised your liveliest powers of description, as well as your most ingenious arts in argument. These might fairly have been employed in a Christian spirit, had the removal of the delusion been your object ; but assuredly not, when your purpose is to rouse public indignation against the deluded. The embellished declamations of the advocate have here, as elsewhere, been substituted for the unadorned statements of the candid reasoner. In page 103, you thus address Mr Canning :—" But  
 " turn to the evidence before you ; seek the truth, not  
 " in the ' goodly gloses' of Dr Doyle, but in the testi-  
 " mony of a man who has no interests of an established  
 " church to bias his judgment, or, if you will, to impair  
 " his credit ; of one who has no interest in the question,  
 " except the highest indeed, but that which is least likely  
 " to mislead him, the general interests of religious truth

“and liberty : turn to the evidence of Mr Burnett, a dissenting minister resident in Cork, and let him tell you what he has himself seen and known.”

Now this eloquent pleading, had it been devised for the purpose, could not have been better calculated to throw your readers off their guard, and to prepare them to receive with implicit confidence, whatever should fall from Mr Burnett on the subject.—The following extract tells us what he has “*seen and known*.”—“No Roman Catholic of the lower orders has any dread of final perdition. I have spoken with them frequently on the subject, and never found one of them that supposed he could go to hell. The confidence in the people of their absolution, which follows confession, is such as completely to destroy in their minds any fear of future punishment. I have found this to be the case generally; and in cases where they are convicted in courts of justice, they very seldom show any thing like a feeling sense of their situation, which, I conceive, arises solely from the conviction, that the absolution enjoyed at the hands of the priest will do every thing for them. *I have seen myself thirty-five individuals in the dock together, sentenced to death, and I could not perceive the least degree of emotion in consequence of the pronouncing of sentence, all of which I attributed to the confidence placed in the absolution of the clergy.*”

What mind can withstand this astounding testimony to the abominations of Romish absolution?—Mr Burnett, a lover of religious truth and liberty,—swayed by no predilection for an established church,—moved by no interest in the question at issue, “*has seen and known all this!*” Now, Sir, without defending the uses to which this doctrine may be or has been applied, I must examine your claims to our implicit confidence in your evidence of them. Of Mr Burnett’s respectability I entertain not the slightest doubt. But notwithstanding your efforts to stifle all ob-



jections to his testimony, I must remind you, that he belongs to a sect (*the Independents*) exceeding perhaps any other in animosity towards the Church of Rome. His habits also, of personal controversy with her members, may be presumed, without any reflection on his integrity, to have so far excited his feelings, as to render it difficult for him to discuss their doctrines and practice, with the impartiality necessary to obtain the unqualified respect you demand for his testimony.\* That such is really the case, is clear from the last passage of his evidence, as quoted by you, and marked by Italic characters for the express purpose of increasing its effect. That the thirty-five individuals alluded to, confident in the absolving power of their priests, should not fear the *consequence* of death, may be readily understood;—but that their fear of death *itself*, and *that* death a painful and ignominious one, should be removed by a cause producing only a subsequent effect, is manifestly absurd. With as much reason it might be argued, that a patient should be insensible to the amputator's knife, because he was convinced that benefit would accrue to him from the amputation. By endeavouring to prove too much, Mr Burnett has failed to prove any thing. He may undoubtedly have found many of the Irish Roman Catholics insensible to the dread of final perdition. In what sect or persuasion, let me ask, may not similar instances be found? Are not crimes daily committed by Protestants of all denominations, in the reckless contempt of a future state, and of present punishment? Mr Burnett manifestly assumes the pernicious influence of the Roman Catholic

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\* Mr Burnett, according to the Author's information, travels through this country as well as Ireland, in order to challenge Roman Catholics to public discussion.



doctrine, and founds his reasoning on the assumption. I must venture to say, that no man accustomed to logical precision, will accept your “unquestionable testimony,” as at all conclusive respecting the abuses of Roman Catholic absolution.

But, even admitting its force to the fullest extent, what has it to do with the present question? Mr Burnett’s observation is confined exclusively to the “lower orders.” He does not pretend to ascribe such effects of absolution to the higher classes of society. Are educated and enlightened Roman Catholics to be denied their rights, because their illiterate and ignorant brethren are under the influence of superstition? Will you be pleased to explain, Sir, why the lower orders, who are thus described as being so fatally deluded, should have long since obtained their natural share of political power, while that portion belonging to their superiors in rank, information, and intelligence, is obstinately withheld?—Such is the fact; and it exhibits one of the many unaccountable and anomalous circumstances connected with this case.

What must your readers think, however, when they learn, that much of Mr Burnett’s evidence is not only favourable to the cause against which you have produced him as a witness, but eminently calculated to calm the very apprehensions you are anxious to excite. I shall offer one or two extracts from that evidence; and they acquire great importance, when we consider the manifest prejudices of the witness respecting the religious principles of Roman Catholics. Mr Burnett, after alluding to the slight intercourse subsisting generally between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, is asked,—“To what circumstance do you attribute that distance?—I think there are a great many mistakes prevailing amongst Protestants, with regard to the sentiments, as well as with regard to the feelings of the Catholics: they imagine that the Catho-

“lies hold doctrines which, I believe, they do not hold;  
 “and they imagine that they are under the influence of  
 “feelings which, I believe, they are not influenced by; and  
 “to these mistakes, I think, a great deal of the distance  
 “that exists between them may be imputed.—Do you  
 “think any part of that distance existing between the Ca-  
 “tholics and the Protestants arises out of the different  
 “situations in which they stand in the eye of the law?—  
 “I think it does. If the difference of situation in which  
 “they stand in the eye of the law were removed, they  
 “would, in point of fact, have very different feelings in  
 “reference to one another, from those they now expe-  
 “rience; and their intercourse would be less trammelled  
 “than it now is, by mutual and conflicting suspicions.”—  
 Mr Burnett is subsequently asked,—“Have you observed  
 “any thing in the tenets of the Roman Catholic religion,  
 “*which practically disqualifies its adherents for the ob-*  
 “*servance of any of the public or private duties of life?*—  
 “I CANNOT SAY THAT I HAVE.—It is unfortunate, Sir,  
 that these passages should have escaped your notice.  
 Their appeal to the benevolent mind, for the instant  
 removal of the law, seems to me absolutely irresistible.

I must now turn to another part of the subject. Mr  
 Canning, in the course of his speech upon this question,  
 had compared the tendency of the Romish and Calvinistic  
 doctrines, in order to show that the latter were more at  
 variance with the safety of the Constitution than the for-  
 mer. His words were as follow (see page 106):—  
 “Would it not be more dangerous to a state to make  
 “good works nothing, and faith every thing? I prefer  
 “the man who insists on the necessity of good works as  
 “part of his religious creed, to the man who considers  
 “himself controlled in all his actions by an inexorable fate.  
 “Refer to history, and see what it teaches on the subject.  
 “Who were they who brought the monarch to the block?

“ Who stripped Episcopacy of its mitre, and of all its spiritual authority and temporal possessions? the Papists? no: but they who were most evidently opposed to them.” To the latter part of this passage you make the following triumphant reply:—“ Your argument,” you say to Mr Canning, “ stands thus: because great mischief was inflicted on our church and nation by one set of madmen two hundred years ago, therefore it is unjust, or foolish, or both, to guard against the avowed hostility of another class of enemies in our own days. Because the Dutch fleet burned Chatham in the seventeenth century, therefore none of our dock-yards ought to be protected against a French fleet in the nineteenth.”

I congratulate you, Sir, on your skill in evading the force of Mr Canning’s argument, and in distracting the attention of the reader from it. And lest I should be supposed to do you injustice, I shall shortly recapitulate the case. Mr Canning’s opponents urge, as an argument against Catholic emancipation, the tendency of Romish doctrines to subvert the British Constitution. In reply to this argument, he states, that they have never contributed to such an effect, but that Calvinistic doctrines have. He thence infers that the latter are more dangerous than the former.—But the Calvinists enjoy constitutional liberties withheld from the Roman Catholics.—This, Mr Canning, on the principle, *major continet minus*, holds to be absurd. He could not persuade himself that the greater security should be opposed to the lesser danger. Unable to meet this reasoning, you make your escape on board the Dutch fleet in the seventeenth century, and thence sound an alarm of the French fleet in the nineteenth.—I must also observe, that your analogy is incorrect. To apply Mr Canning’s reasoning, which it is intended to illustrate, it should be altered thus:—“ Because the Dutch fleet burned Chatham in the seventeenth century, there-



“fore no French ships ought to be permitted to enter the “Thames in the nineteenth.”—Artifices such as these, Sir, I may say without disrespect, are fitter objects of ridicule than reason. But sanctioned by your name, their complete exposure is necessary.

Mr Canning did unquestionably refer, as you merely intimate a probability that he might have done, to the “wild opinions of the fanatics in Charles’s time,” and not to “modern and sober-minded Calvinists.” But this takes nothing from the force of his argument. On the contrary, your admission of the influence of time on the wildest opinions, tends materially to strengthen it. The dogmas of Calvin are as immutable as the doctrines of the Church of Rome. Their effect on the minds of his modern disciples has become much milder; but the letter remains the same. Diffusion of knowledge, and proportionate liberality of sentiment, have necessarily tempered the fanatical spirit which once characterised this and other sects. And if this effect is not equally produced on the Roman Catholics, to what shall we attribute their obstinacy, but to the irritation occasioned by the insult inflicted, through political pains and disabilities, on their social and religious feelings?

Let us now turn to your elaborate discussion of the doctrine of Papal supremacy, and your attempt to show that, extending its influence over the Irish Roman Catholics, it endangers the rights of their lawful sovereign.

I hope, Sir, to prove that your evidence in support of this influence is not conclusive; and were it even so, that your arguments founded upon it are unsound. I shall also be able to point out some remarkable discrepancies in the testimony cited by you.

In pages 110. and 111. you admit that the Gallican church (the largest, by the by, in communion with Rome) rejects the supreme authority of the Pope, and



emphatically declare, that “its liberties form a proud exception to the general state of spiritual bondage in which other Roman Catholic countries are more or less enthralled.” Yet in page 113. you assert, “*that* doctrine is not contradicted by any ecclesiastical authority: it is favoured at Rome; and everywhere else, it is tolerated by those who do not assent to it.” How are we to reconcile the liberties of the Gallican church with the toleration of this doctrine?

Courtesy might induce a belief that you had, through an oversight, omitted to state this exception in the last quoted passage. But when in page 121. you repeat the same sweeping assertion, and so expressed as to admit of no exception whatever;—unwilling to conceive you capable of intentionally misleading your readers, I can only suppose you have deceived yourself.

Your words are these:—“Sir, I must think that a claim to supremacy such as this, acknowledged and acted upon by all the ecclesiastics in communion with Rome, entering into and directing their devotions, hallowed by association with all that is most sacred in their religion, is not a matter to be treated with contempt.”

For a description of supremacy, such as you would represent it, you have recurred to a bull of the seventeenth century; and finding in it a picture sufficiently revolting for your purpose, you present it to the public as the criterion of Roman Catholic feeling in the present day. You have endeavoured, in the nineteenth century, to make a nation believe, that every ecclesiastic in communion with Rome, cherishes as a most sacred association,—acknowledges and acts upon,—and in his devotions is guided by, the spirit of that bull which canonized Pius V. for “his unhesitating zeal in striking with his dread anathema the impious heretic Elizabeth, the pretended Queen of England, the slave of shameful vices,

“and the favourer of heretics, absolving her subjects from their allegiance, and depriving herself, by Pontifical authority, of her pretended right to the throne of England.”

I am unwilling to express myself respecting such attempts as this; and I need scarcely dwell on the illogicism of substituting, for the general doctrine of supremacy, a contingency to its usurpation, in a particular instance. I shall be content to appeal to any of your readers, whether the bull in question, which was despised by Elizabeth, and disregarded by her Roman Catholic subjects in 1568, was not a fair object of contempt to Mr Canning in 1826?

It is singular, that though you have exhausted the records of former centuries in searching for matter prejudicial to your Roman Catholic brethren, you have neglected documents of the present time favourable to them, and bearing much more directly on your subject. The oaths daily taken by Roman Catholics, both lay and ecclesiastical;—the answers from the universities of Alcalá, Salamanca, Valladolid and Louvain (I omit Douay and Paris, because they are of the Gallican church), when consulted on this point by Mr Pitt’s desire;—the Pontifical declaration of Pius VI. in a letter dated 1791, to the Romish archbishops of Ireland,—all disclaim and deprecate the notion, that the Pope, or any foreign prelate or potentate, has any, the least, temporal authority or right of jurisdiction in these realms. Yet, Sir, in defiance of these facts, your ignorance of which, I may not, even in charity, presume, you positively insist, that “the Pope’s temporal supremacy is acknowledged and acted upon by all the ecclesiastics in communion with Rome.”

Let us suppose, however, that such is really the fact, and proceed to examine whether your inference of danger to the British crown, is fairly drawn from it. You introduce this inference on the principle “that cases may

“undoubtedly be put, where, in the exercise of the most  
 “awful responsibility that can be incurred, subjects are  
 “bound by their duty to God, to themselves, and their pos-  
 “terity, to rise against their lawful sovereign, and assert  
 “those rights which tyranny would annihilate.” See page  
 121. You then inform us, that this responsibility is re-  
 moved from Roman Catholic subjects; that they may not,  
 in short, under any circumstances, rise against their law-  
 ful sovereign, without the Pope’s permission.—And hence  
 the danger to the sovereign’s rights!!

Your labour in endeavouring to establish this inference betrays a sense of the difficulties that lay in your way. I must be excused from toiling after you through this intricate portion of your letter, and shall confine myself to what seems to me a true and simple view of the question.

Let us then suppose Ireland so aggrieved by injuries merely secular (a partial system of countervailing duties, for instance, or an oppressive military government), that Irishmen, without distinction of sect, should feel themselves “bound by their duty to God, to themselves, and their  
 “posterity, to rise against their lawful sovereign.” The Protestant population would rise accordingly; the Roman Catholics must wait for the Pope’s permission to do so.

Now, you must either admit, that this change of tribunal would be favourable to the sovereign’s rights (the very reverse of your inference), or you must be prepared to contend that an exasperated people would judge more impartially in their own case, than a foreign and disinterested arbiter.

But you may reply, that the grievances complained of in Ireland, so far from being merely secular, are identified with the Roman Catholic religion, and that consequently the Pope is not a disinterested arbiter. Doubtless, he is not so disinterested in this case, as in the sup-



posed one. Yet he is much less interested than the sufferers themselves, and much less likely therefore to decide with impatience on the degree of grievances that would justify them in renouncing their allegiance.

But allowing your assumption of the Pope's temporal supremacy, and your inference from it, to be as true as they appear to be unwarrantable; let us see how the main point at issue, namely, Roman Catholic emancipation, would be affected in such a case. The Pope, you say, possesses the power of releasing Irish Roman Catholics from their allegiance, and there is considerable danger of his doing so. Now, it is beyond all doubt that he will not do so without provocation. But this provocation exists, and exists only in the insult offered to the Church of which he is the head, by our harsh and suspicious treatment of its members. Hence arises the danger.—And in order to avert it, you call on us to perpetuate the evil that creates it!!!

Among the errors, Sir, into which your extravagant zeal against Papacy has betrayed you, there is none more remarkable than the discordant nature of your testimony. One or two examples will be sufficient to warn your fondest admirers against an implicit confidence in your authority upon this subject.

In pages 32, 33—you describe the Irish priesthood as “exhorting their flocks, to be prepared, if necessary, to “sacrifice their lives, rather than surrender the freedom of “their Church to prelate or pope.” Yet afterwards, with a special view to Ireland, your pages are loaded with testimony to show “that every ecclesiastic in communion “with Rome acknowledges and acts upon the doctrine of “the Pope's supremacy.”—In page 128, you offer to our notice the following sentiments of two Roman Catholic bishops, and appeal to them as the testimony of Irish Roman Catholics in general. “Dr Troy,” you say, “in



“a pastoral letter, dated Dublin, 25th May 1798, makes  
 “a warm and handsome eulogy on the large share of  
 “civil, political, and religious rights with which the  
 “Roman Catholics were now legally invested.”—Dr Moy-  
 lan, addressing his brethren at Cork, uses the following  
 expressions (I quote them from your own letter):—“I  
 “would have you,” says that meek and forgiving prelate,  
 “not unmindful of the blessings you enjoy, and the fa-  
 “vours you have received. Certain privileges excepted,  
 “*you possess the advantages of the Constitution. The pe-*  
 “*nal laws* under which our fathers groaned, *have been*  
 “*almost done away with.* You have the comfort of exer-  
 “cising your holy religion without controul; and to the  
 “benignity of Government, and the liberality of Parlia-  
 “ment, we are indebted for the establishment and endow-  
 “ment of a Roman Catholic College, on an extensive  
 “plan, which will afford a liberal education to our youth,  
 “and a supply of clergy to our church, when the present  
 “generation have finished their career. *These are fa-*  
 “*vours that should excite and call out all our gratitude;*  
 “and this gratitude we should evince by a *steady attach-*  
 “*ment to the Constitution, and unshaken loyalty to our*  
 “*gracious Sovereign.*”

Sir, I must think, that a prelacy such as this, acknow-  
 ledged by every Irishman in communion with Rome—di-  
 recting their devotions—hallowed by associations with all  
 that is most sacred in their religion, is not a fit object of  
 terror or suspicion.—Yet no farther back than in the page  
 but one preceding these remarks, you had held up this  
 very prelacy as the dangerous instruments of papal supre-  
 macy, “describing an intolerable tyranny as even now  
 “exercised by the Government of their own land.”—The  
 Roman Catholic Bishops, in short, are rebellious or loyal,  
 mischievous or innocuous, exactly as may suit your mo-  
 mentary purpose;—rebellious, when you would excite

alarm at their influence ;—and loyal, when it is convenient to deny that their flocks feel themselves degraded by political exclusion. In each case, you attempt to attach odium to Mr Canning as their advocate ; and lest you should fail, you associate his name with those of Cobbett and O'Connel.

There is yet another instance of contradiction in your evidence, even more strange and extravagant than any hitherto noticed.

In one part of your letter, you have laid unbounded stress on Father Walsh's testimony, that there is a certain class of oaths "to which equivocation and mental reservation may be applied ; *and that this is especially the case with oaths of allegiance or supremacy taken to the King.*" I have already pointed out the purpose for which this testimony was produced. In reasoning afterwards, however, on the Pope's supremacy, it was necessary, for obvious causes, to keep Father Walsh out of sight ; and in page 123, you exhibit Dr O'Connor, a living ecclesiastic, to prove, not merely that a Roman Catholic cannot disclaim his oaths of allegiance without the sanction of the Pope, but also that "NO POPE, NO COUNCIL CAN ABSOLVE OR DISPENSE, SO LONG AS THE NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE OATH ARE THE SAME."

Now, Sir, I defy all the ingenuity of man to reconcile these conflicting authorities. Hold to which of them you chuse ; I will undertake, by the aid of the other, to overthrow you. If you adhere to Father Walsh, what becomes of the danger you ascribe to the Pope's power of releasing men from oaths of allegiance *which never were binding* ? If you abide by Dr O'Connor, what credit is due to your previous denial that these oaths are taken in good faith, and to your invectives and warnings on the subject of Roman Catholic dissimulation ?

Before closing my remarks on your first letter, let me

call your attention, Sir, to an important circumstance common to all works that are written in a similar spirit of controversial violence; namely, the dangerous effect they are calculated to produce on sceptical minds. They are no doubt as agreeable to the prejudices of Protestants, as they are irritating to the feelings of Roman Catholics. They may gratify the pride of the one, while they extinguish the hope of the other. But, Sir, allow me to caution you, lest in your zeal against **POPERY**, you impair the interests of **CHRISTIANITY**: lest in your eagerness to exalt the **CHURCH OF ENGLAND** before men, you inadvertently endanger their reverence for the **CHURCH OF CHRIST**. It would be difficult, I think, for any person of reflection to rise from the perusal of your pages, without some momentary sense of pain and misgiving. If the spirit infused into them be really the spirit of our Protestant church, how lamentably at variance does it appear with the spirit of the Gospel?—If the principles and influence of the Romish creed be actually such as you describe, how much purer must any moral state of Heathenism be, than that in which the greater portion of the Christian world exists?—Do the errors of the Hindoo or Mahometan excite half the disgust and abhorrence which we are taught by you to cherish against the disciples of Jesus?—Such thoughts as these involuntarily suggest themselves; and I beseech you, Sir, to consider whether it is safe to produce them. I beseech you to consider, whether it is an edifying spectacle for the scoffer and reviler to see a minister of religion so earnestly labouring to degrade his Christian brethren, and raking up all the slime deposited for centuries by the waters of religious strife, to fling upon those who worship the same God and Redeemer, and who derive all their fondest hopes from the same eternal source as himself.

I need scarcely, Sir, avow my conviction that you are



utterly unconscious of contributing to any such evil effects. But I am equally convinced, that the true interests of our religion must be materially injured by the violent party spirit which is unfortunately so conspicuous throughout your pages.

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My observations on your second letter shall be brief. It is chiefly remarkable for the sharpness of its personal attack on Mr Canning, to impair whose reputation for sincerity towards the Catholic cause, seems to have been its principal aim. His contradictory expressions, on which you mainly found your imputations, might be easily accounted for, without ascribing them to a failure of principle. Had you been content, however, to impeach his political consistency, I am disposed to think the triumph you obtained, such as it was, would have been more gratifying. In what evil hour did the thought suggest itself of charging Mr Canning with irreverence towards the Sovereign's coronation oath, and profanity for an allusion to Scripture, where the innocence of his intentions is, in both cases, clear as the light of day? The good and generous of all parties must condemn such attempts to raise a clamour against an adversary; and I can scarcely doubt that the death of the distinguished individual whom they were meant to wound, has since awakened recollections in your breast, sufficient to avenge the wrong.

The merits of a cause, however, cannot be affected by the demerits of its advocate; and it is not easy for an unsuspecting mind to discover why Mr Canning's character has been so mixed up with this cause throughout your pages. The only topic of general interest discussed in your second letter, is the coronation oath of the King, as



it bears upon the present question; and I shall confine my remaining observations to what has fallen from you respecting it.

In page 19, you concur in the opinion of Lord Liverpool, that if Parliament presented a bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics, under the persuasion *that it would strengthen the church*, his Majesty could not be advised to consider it as at variance with the obligations of his oath; and you assent to this principle, if the measure proposed was *even free from all danger to the church*. In a subsequent page (24), however, you apparently endeavour to qualify, if not to invalidate, the opinion of his Lordship, by stating that it was founded on the terms of the oath as enjoined by 1. W. and M. c. 2; which oath, you say, afterwards received important additions by the treaty of union with Scotland. As far as I can understand your reasoning, it is meant to show, that these additions imposed upon the future Monarchs of Great Britain, a peremptory obligation to maintain and preserve inviolable *all the laws then in existence* relating to the church. If such be the case, his late Majesty manifestly violated his oath, by repealing so many of these laws against his Roman Catholic subjects—a fact which, I think, you will scarcely venture to maintain. If it be not the case, I cannot comprehend how Lord Liverpool's opinion is affected by the alleged alterations in the statute. While you thus attempt to fix so rigorous a construction on the present oath, you admit, however, in the very next page (25), that if his Majesty could be satisfied with the securities proposed by a bill for Roman Catholic relief, “he would rejoice in extending an equal share of civil and political rights to all his subjects.” This admission at once demolishes the insurmountable barrier you had previously tried to raise, on the terms of the treaty of union with Scotland. It also sets at rest, I may presume, the objec-

tion to *every* measure of relief, grounded on the principle, that the King cannot alter the *established law* of the realm relating to the church.

But the main purport of your argument is to prove, that his Majesty must be left to the unbiassed exercise of his own feelings on the subject.—That it would be as glaring a defection from duty in him to assent to any bill in favour of the Roman Catholics, *unless he was himself perfectly satisfied of its harmless tendency*; as it would be a gross interference with his Royal conscience, on the part of any minister who should advise his Sovereign to do so.

After noticing Lord Liverpool's opinion, you say, in page 20, "But this leaves the most important consideration in the case wholly untouched. *The oath taken by the King is a purely personal act; it is an act between himself and God.* To apply to it our little, convenient political fictions,—to say, that as the King can do no wrong; as all his questionable acts must be regarded as the acts of his ministers, therefore they must direct him in such a case as this, would be more foolish even than it would be presumptuous." The reverence for the supposed conscientious scruples of the Monarch expressed in this passage and elsewhere, with so much solemnity of tone, tends unluckily to screen the fallacy of your argument from detection.

Now, "The most important consideration" to which you assume the merit of drawing our attention, has not, I venture to affirm, escaped a single mind that thinks upon the subject. Who could for a moment forget that the King's oath implies a personal act between himself and God? This is the very essence of every oath taken by Christian men. The terms of oaths, however, necessarily vary, and the conditions imposed by them differ, while the religious obligation remains the same in all.

Some merely embrace matters of which the most ordinary observation and experience enable every one to judge. Others contemplate a course of conduct depending on circumstances and contingencies; and these sometimes require much mental acuteness, and even professional skill, to ascertain the best means of fulfilling the obligation. Thus, for instance, if I swear as a witness "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," my duty with regard to this oath is clear and simple, at all times and in all cases, and is equally so to every man who takes a similar oath.—But if I swear as an executor, to administer faithfully the trusts reposed in me by the will of a deceased friend, it is obvious that my duty may become complicated, difficult, and doubtful. Much care and attention are required to collect the true spirit of the testator's meaning. Arrangements that seemed one day essential to the due performance of the trust, may be defeated the next by new and unexpected claims upon me. Legal advisers must be consulted as to the nature of these claims, and the legality of conceding or of denying them. Various opinions may be given, and all may differ from mine.—Am I then bound by the tenor of my oath to act upon my own judgment, and reject the advice of men learned in the law?—No one, surely, will hazard so preposterous an assertion. My duty is clearly to abide by the opinion of counsel, on whose talents and integrity I can most rely, as this course evidently affords the best security for the due fulfilment of my oath.

What is there then in the case of the Sovereign respecting his coronation oath, materially differing from this? You have, Sir, in several instances clouded the subject by an obscurity of expression, and, whether it is the effect of misapprehension in your own mind or not, it must undoubtedly have had the effect of misleading



others. In alluding to the probability of his Majesty's communication with political or religious ministers concerning this question, in page 20, you say, "it would be the grossest insult to the Monarch, it would be degrading him from the rank of a moral being, to suppose that he would regard the advice of such counsellors, be they who they may, as acquitting him of the awful responsibility of acting in such a case on the deliberate determination of his own *conscience*."—And again, in page 21, "The minister who should dare to tell his Sovereign—that he may act on the *conscience* of his Parliament, or his Privy Council," &c.—And pursuing a similar strain, in page 25, you say,—"If, indeed, such measures were proposed as the *conscience* of the Sovereign could regard as a really fair and ample security of the great objects to the maintenance of which he is bound by oath, the case would be different," &c.—It is difficult to account for the use of such expressions by any person accustomed to think or write with accuracy. The idea of the *conscience* of the Monarch taking cognizance of the fitness of political securities, is perfectly unintelligible. It is his *mind* or *intellectual faculty* alone that is employed for the purpose. All that the moral sense does or can do in this case is, to inform him of the rectitude or error of his motives and intentions. The question as to the most efficient mode of fulfilling the royal oath, then, is simply a question of political prudence or expediency; and the only doubt that can arise in the conscience of the Monarch on the subject is,—as to the moral propriety of surrendering up his own judgment, and deferring to the collective wisdom of that body of men in whose counsels he ordinarily confides. I must venture, Sir, to contend, notwithstanding your high authority and emphatic assertions to the contrary,—not only



that his Majesty is justified in doing so,—but that the most scrupulous regard for his oath will naturally incline him to do so.

The terms of the oath are, that “ he will, to the utmost “ of his power, maintain the Protestant reformed religion “ established by law.” Now, it is the known desire and intention of his Majesty to fulfil this sacred obligation, so that his motives are exempt from all blame, whatever course he may pursue. The means of fulfilling it, however, as I have shown, are not determinable by the conscience, but by the judgment. It is a question, not of morals, but of politics; and one on which a considerable difference of opinion exists. Some regard the laws against Roman Catholics as the only effectual safeguard to the Established Church. Others are persuaded that their total repeal, on the most gracious terms, is not only consistent with, but essential to its preservation in Ireland. I am bound to assume, that the professed sentiments of the liberal party are as much in accordance with their sincere convictions as those of their opponents.—It is an assumption, indeed; most material to the right understanding of this question, especially as you have, by one of a contrary description, contributed to encourage the prejudices, as well as to perplex the judgments of your readers. Where such a difference of honest opinion prevails then, the very obligation incurred by the Sovereign will naturally make him solicitous to consult the highest sources of wisdom and experience as to the means for its fulfilment. The very earnestness and sincerity of his desire to fulfil it, will weaken his reliance on his own judgment, while they induce him to seek the best advice he can obtain from others. For this purpose he will have recourse to those who are invested by the Constitution with the privilege of guiding his royal mind, and whom he has himself selected on account of their known application to and attainments

in the science of government. While his Majesty's sentiments coincide with those of his Ministers and Parliament, there can be no difficulty in the case. But assuming the fact, which you, Sir, upon what authority I know not, have distinctly asserted, that his opinions are adverse to the concession of the Roman Catholic claims,—let us also assume that his Ministers and Parliament are favourable to it, and see how the coronation oath affects his royal conduct under such circumstances.—Momentous questions of state policy require the exercise of all the political skill and experience that can be brought to bear upon them. Now, these qualities are supposed to be united in the most eminent degree in the persons invested with the executive government, and in the great council of the nation, to which the Constitution has assigned the power of determining all such questions. No one will deny, that the wisest course which his Majesty generally can pursue, and which he does invariably pursue, respecting them, is to act upon the deliberate opinion of those his constitutional advisers. If such, then, be generally his *wisest* course, I contend, that it must also, in this particular case, be his *most conscientious* one, in conformity with the coronation oath, because—IT AFFORDS THE SUREST AND STRONGEST GROUNDS FOR CONFIDENCE IN THE MEASURES RECOMMENDED FOR FULFILLING THAT SACRED OBLIGATION, ACCORDING TO ITS TRUE INTENT AND PURPOSE.

In order to illustrate the truth of this reasoning, let us suppose the Sovereign, acting on his own judgment, to resist concession, in defiance of the united voice of his Ministers and Parliament, and the result to be, a successful convulsion in Ireland, and overthrow of its established church.—Must he not reasonably blame himself for persevering, contrary to the best advice, in measures that have had the effect of frustrating the intention of his oath?—But let us suppose the same unfortunate results

to follow, should he consent to forego his own opinion, in deference to the collective wisdom of the nation.—Would not the consciousness of his pure intentions fully acquit the Sovereign, in his own mind? and would not every uneasy thought be stifled by the consideration that he had acted on the deliberate opinion of his responsible constitutional advisers,—and not upon his own?

I must now, Sir, conclude my observations on your letters to Mr Canning.—They are melancholy proofs of the extent to which the highest talents may be perverted by religious intolerance.—The celebrity obtained by them, can only be ascribed to the excitement of the public mind in favour of whatever ministers to passion and prejudice. In calm and sober reasoning,—in fair deduction from fact and experience, they are lamentably deficient; and, I grieve to say, they are equally deficient in the true spirit of Christian meekness.—We must all acknowledge and deplore the errors of Roman Catholic belief; but assuredly we ought to view them “more in sorrow than in anger:” and even if we feel justified in defending the political restraints upon its professors, we are at least bound to do so, with charity and forbearance. It is enough, that we hold them down by the strong arm of the law, without insulting them in their prostrate condition.

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“ It is excellent  
 “ To have a giant’s strength, but it is tyrannous  
 “ To use it like a giant !”

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I proceed to fulfil the second part of my proposed design, and to offer some arguments, founded on religious considerations, in favour of the most prompt concession



of the Roman Catholic claims. It is an extraordinary fact, Sir, that throughout the discussion of this question, in which so many churchmen like yourself have taken an active part, it has rarely been treated with reference to our moral and religious obligations. The friends of the Roman Catholics have repeatedly asserted, that the restrictions imposed on that body are inconsistent with the principles of Christian justice. But this view of the question has been studiously evaded by their opponents. I am not aware that the abstract right of Roman Catholic subjects, to participate in the benefits of the Constitution, has ever been gravely denied. Were we to judge from the nature of the arguments employed against them, indeed, it would seem to be very generally admitted. These arguments (if they can be so called), only attempt to show how far they are incapacitated from the enjoyment of their rights, by the dangerous tendency of their religious opinions and discipline. It may therefore be fairly assumed, that such tendency constitutes their sole objection. *To alarm the Protestant community* then, by a lively and exaggerated description of Roman Catholic bigotry, and by elaborate and antiquated charges of Roman Catholic hostility towards the established religion, has been the constant, perhaps the only aim of the advocates of what is called Protestant ascendancy. I confess, it appears to me astonishing that men, of minds the purest and most conscientious, and of the soundest understandings, which many of them undoubtedly possess, should be actuated by groundless apprehensions, and unaffected by that calm consideration of this question, which they invariably bestow upon other subjects, when the rights or enjoyments of their fellow men are endangered. No serious or reflecting Christian will defend even his life or his property, by means that are not strictly justifiable



in the sight both of God and man. In neither case will he advance one step beyond those necessary precautions, allowed by divine as well as by human laws for his protection. Guided by the strictest principles of rectitude in all the other concerns of life, why do such men evince so little anxiety for the moral character of their conduct towards their Roman Catholic brethren?—How is it, that in the discussion of this great question, we hear so much of it, as affects our PROTESTANT INTERESTS and the RIGHTS OF THE CHURCH;—and so little, as concerns our CHRISTIAN DUTIES, and the PRECEPTS OF THE GOSPEL?—Can a religious mind really sanction any system of laws or conduct, without examining its moral foundation, on the mere assurance that it is necessary for the safety of the church?—If so, the Protestant indisputably acts upon the very principle with which the Roman Catholics are most severely charged, namely, that of holding the obligation to their church as paramount to their duty to God.\* It is impossible for us, I humbly conceive, to plead innocent to this charge, if it can be distinctly shown, that we are pursuing a course of conduct at variance with the established rules of Christian morality,

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\* The following may serve as an instance of the contempt with which religion has been treated on this subject. During the last Session of Parliament, a doggrel poem appeared in one of the newspapers, in which a venerable bishop of the established church was attacked with indecent levity and vulgar abuse. The reader will immediately suspect that this was the offspring of Roman Catholic malignity, and will naturally turn to Dr Philpott's pages, for the record of it.—He is mistaken.—The poem appeared in a journal devoted to Protestant ascendancy, and consequently patronised by the friends of that cause, both lay and ecclesiastical. The bishop then had been guilty of some gross crime?—He had, with his usual benignity of heart and mildness of manners, *pleaded the cause of the Roman Catholics on the grounds of Christian justice and toleration !!!*

under the pretence of acting for the welfare of the church. It is to this point then, Sir, that I venture to bespeak your attention throughout the succeeding pages; and I trust I may be able to show, that the conscientious opponents of the Catholic claims, have hitherto acted under a delusion on the subject. If so, I must presume to assert, it is their bounden duty as men, influenced by the faith and consequent obligations of Christianity, to give the fullest benefit of their services to the Roman Catholic cause.

Although there can be no dispute among the disciples of Christ as to the spirit and tendency of his moral instructions, much difference evidently exists respecting their application to individual conduct. Mankind are so prone to assume a latitude in acting upon the general rules of love and charity, justice and forbearance, according to their passions and prejudices, that it would be extremely difficult to assign any precise bounds of duty on a given occasion, which would be equally felt and acknowledged by all. Many, for instance, persuade themselves, at this moment, they are fulfilling the Royal law of love, and exercising the true spirit of religious toleration towards their Roman Catholic brethren.—Others seriously believe the penal laws affecting them to be totally inconsistent with that toleration.—From whence does this difference of sentiment arise? Purely, I conceive, from the indulgence in the liberty given by the Gospel to every man, to regulate his motives and conduct according to its general rules. This liberty, however, as I have intimated, is frequently abused, *notwithstanding the personal responsibility annexed to its exercise*. We contrive to satisfy our own breasts for the very scant measure of justice, mercy, and forgiveness, that we are accustomed to deal out to each other, under some of the numerous delusions aris-

ing out of our moral temperaments, and varying in their nature with the moral characters of men. If this were not the case, it is difficult to conceive how the professors of Christianity could reconcile any state of suffering to which others are subject on account of their religious creed, with the principles of Christian toleration.

There is, however, one simple and sublime maxim,—one precise and positive law of Christ, that annihilates all these delusions and evasions as to the true measure of religious toleration; and that brings down all his rules to a sure and common standard, where no improper or unreasonable latitude can be assumed. This rule adjusts itself with the nicest accuracy to every act of every man's life in his social capacity, whatever its nature or moral dimensions may be;—whether it relates to matters of inferior import, or of the highest concernment;—whether it involves the conduct of individuals, or of communities, towards each other.—On this maxim, Sir, I take my stand, for the defence of my Roman Catholic brethren against the penalties of a persecuting law.

“ALL THINGS,” says our Saviour, “WHATSOEVER YE, “WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO UNTO YOU, DO EVEN SO “TO THEM.”\* Now, in the interpretation of this precept, we must reconcile it at all times to the rules of reason, and to the plain and intelligible rights of men. We are only bound to do to others, those things which, if we were to change our respective situations and circumstances with them, we should *in reason and right*, desire that they should do unto us. But under this limitation, THE RULE IS PERSPICUOUS AND PEREMPTORY, AND UNIVERSALLY BINDING UPON THE CHRISTIAN WORLD.

It must, however, be admitted, that our social obliga-

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\* St Matthew, chap. vii. ver. 12.



tions may be viewed under an erroneous aspect, even by those who are conscientiously disposed to fulfil them; and that we require to guard ourselves strictly against being moved by a partial view of circumstances in any given case. Let us suppose, for instance, that I encounter a poor wretch upon the high road, with his hands rigorously bound; who relates a piteous story of having been robbed, and beaten, and manacled, and implores my assistance to set him free. The sense of mercy must instantly prompt me to release him.—But suppose an individual comes up, who declares him to be a dangerous maniac escaping from his keepers.—Another obligation, namely, that of justice to society, now interposes its claims upon me, and how am I to act? It was once my obvious duty to release the sufferer. It is no longer so, if the latter representation be true. I am bound, then, narrowly to investigate the circumstances before I decide. To deliver up an innocent man to captivity upon the mere assertions of another, would be as flagrant a breach of duty, as knowingly to let a raving maniac go free. I demand the keeper's proofs, and he produces from the pocket of the prisoner a concealed weapon, stolen previous to his escape, on attempting to deprive him of which, the unfortunate creature becomes outrageous. Upon such *sufficient showing* only, can I satisfy my sense of duty, in allowing the captive to be led back in his chains.

From this illustration, it is plain, that we may be called on to perform an act which, on imperfect or precipitate consideration, appears to be a duty, but from which we are exempted by a more mature investigation of the case. It is equally plain, however, that this exemption can only be admissible on sure and definite grounds. We shall incur a heavy responsibility if we deny the appeal to our justice or benevolence through a mere pretence, or an ill-founded persuasion that a higher call of duty requires it from us.



THE PROOFS OF THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH DENIAL MUST BE CLEAR AND CONVINCING.

Great as is the responsibility incurred by us under such circumstances, however, it becomes much more serious when we commit a positive wrong, from a confused notion or on insufficient evidence of the necessity that impels us to it. To inflict an injury is a more aggravated sin than to refuse a benefit; and consequently requires a greater degree of caution to abstain from it. Whenever, therefore, we molest our neighbour's person, or invade his property, or disturb his rights, we must solemnly satisfy our consciences *on the most evident grounds of assurance*, that the primary law of nature requires the act in defence of our own persons, properties, or rights. WE CANNOT INFLICT A WOUND UPON ANOTHER, EXCEPT FOR THE OVERRULING, PLAIN, AND PALPABLE PURPOSE OF AVERTING ONE, WHICH WE MUST OTHERWISE INEVITABLY RECEIVE FROM HIM.

To illustrate this proposition, let us suppose, that I meet a traveller on an unfrequented road; a dark, dangerous looking man. My suspicions of his intention to rob or murder me in this lonely place are presently excited, and increase as we approach each other. My state of nervous trepidation is hurried to extremity on observing him to thrust his hand suddenly into his bosom, as if in search of some instrument of destruction. I instantly draw a pistol, which I had carried for my protection, and shoot him through the heart. Unconscious of having committed any moral wrong, I proceed to examine his person. I then discover the object for which he sought in his breast, to be a paper containing a petition for charity, and recommending him as worthy of compassion; and that foreign features and complexion had impressed me with the apprehension of some malignant design.

What must my feelings be on such a discovery? Could the whole world offer any thing to restore my peace of mind, after the commission of so rash a deed?—How far the offence might be extenuated in the eyes of heavenly mercy by the *sudden and resistless* nature of the feelings that betrayed me, none of us can say.—But the case is undeniably one, in which, to all human apprehension, I am chargeable with a very grievous crime.

From these considerations then, one plain and irresistible inference is to be deduced, namely, that we must not allow our passions or imagination to beguile us from fulfilling the obvious intention of the divine maxim of “doing unto others, all things whatsoever we would that they should do unto us.” THE JUDGMENT MUST BE DELIBERATELY SATISFIED THAT THERE ARE SUFFICIENT GROUNDS FOR DEPARTING FROM IT, BEFORE THE CONSCIENCE CAN RIGHTLY APPROVE. This is a principle to which, I humbly conceive, every Christian must assent.—Let me then examine how far we are acting in conformity with it towards our Roman Catholic fellow subjects.

In the first place, we refuse to relieve them from a state of restraint, the power of doing which, we fully and exclusively possess. In the next place, we are ourselves actively concerned in imposing this restraint upon them. We must first inquire then, whether their demand is ostensibly consistent with reason and right, and such as comes within the spirit and meaning of our Saviour’s maxim. And secondly, whether there are sufficient grounds in the actual circumstances of the case to justify our rejection of their claim.

Now, there is scarcely any privilege enjoyed under our free Constitution more highly prized, or more loudly extolled by Englishmen, than that of being able to attain eminence and distinction in the state, by the mere influence of personal merit.—All the ordinary impediments

to greatness, vanish before the industry and sagacity of a richly gifted mind in this land of liberty. All the avenues to fame, fortune, and power, lie open to him who is enabled by his masterly resources, to overcome the obstructions naturally arising from competition. Under this happy dispensation of things, the Roman Catholic *alone* stands excluded by the law from the hopes that inspire the minds and animate the exertions of his brethren.—To him alone, this mighty privilege of talents and character is denied.—For him alone it is decreed that he shall toil amidst the inferior stations of his profession, with powers of mind that would infallibly place other men in its most exalted ranks.—From him alone it is required, that he shall contribute liberally to the support of the state, while he is deprived of the boasted blessings of its Constitution.

Another much admired feature of this Constitution is, that all the great interests of the country are represented in the British Parliament. Each has its separate advocates there to watch over its affairs, and to defend it against the encroachments of the others. The mercantile and manufacturing communities,—the naval and military professions,—the holders of funded and of landed property,—the bar and the church,—the established religion of England and of Scotland, and the *dissenters* from both, all enjoy the right of being represented. Individuals belonging to their several orders are ready on all occasions to oppose, by whatever influence they can exert, any attempt in Parliament to assail their interests. Here, again, the Roman Catholic is singled out as unworthy of obtaining such means of protection. He is spurned from the doors of Parliament as if tainted with some moral leprosy which civilised society could not endure; or sprung from some degenerate race, whom mankind, by common consent, had doomed to perpetual indignity. The members of other religious sects, all equally impressed with an



aversion to Popery,—may combine at any moment to inflict the severest penalties on Roman Catholics. Not an individual bound by a fraternity of feeling and community of interest to defend them, is enabled effectually to raise his voice to deprecate the infliction.

While the Constitution maintains the principle, that all men's rights are sacred, and are to be equally protected, it also affirms, with an admirable anxiety for impartial justice, that no man shall be convicted without a patient hearing—that no man shall be punished except upon the clearest proof of guilt.—In vain, however, does the Roman Catholic protest against a sentence of outlawry, founded upon mere representations, and those of his *avowed enemies*.—In vain does he disclaim opinions at variance with the safety of the Church and State.—In vain does he asseverate his innocence before God and man.—His most solemn oaths in his own behalf are discredited, while the bare assertions of his adversary are received “as proofs of holy writ” against him. Wherever his services can benefit the country, he is sworn as a soldier—as a juryman—as a magistrate—without the slightest suspicion of his integrity. But when the country is called upon to benefit him in return, a thousand voices are raised to denounce him as a moral monster, with whom no faith can be maintained. We take his money, and we take his blood in profusion, and we leave him the dregs of the Constitution to repair the loss.—And to crown all, we even claim a monopoly in reviling.—While we load him and his religion with every species of obloquy;—while its very name is a by-word in our mouths, for all that is most hateful to our feelings, and a sure signal to kindle the bitterest passions of multitudes against him; we are indignant to the last degree, that he should dare to complain. The intemperate expressions extorted from him by unmerited suffering, are recorded as evidence of his



dangerous spirit, and assigned as a reason for perpetuating the very wrong that has obviously provoked them.—Sir, every moral sense revolts at this treatment of the Roman Catholic, by his brethren in faith and in blood.—Justice shudders,—generosity blushes,—and charity weeps at it.

The inquiry I have now to make, however, is, not whether this treatment be just or generous, but whether *it is not a grievance to the Roman Catholics, such as no men are bound calmly to acquiesce in*. All that we have to ascertain, is, the rightful and reasonable nature of their claims. Do these claims imply any thing, but what we ourselves, under similar circumstances, must feel a *just and rational*, as well as an ardent and natural desire to obtain? Do they imply any thing which may not in *reason and equity* be conceded?—Sir, I defy any man who knows what justice or reason is, to affirm that they do.—The anxiety of the Roman Catholics to be relieved from their present state of disability, is the instinctive desire of every man conscious of suffering,—conscious of the injustice under which he suffers,—and conscious of the moral obligation which binds his fellow beings to relieve him.

Their appeal then, I humbly contend, is one which no Christian mind can honestly evade. It will not do to say, as is daily said, “that the law has been already sufficiently relaxed:—that the Roman Catholics enjoy their “liberty of worship undisturbed, and ought to be content.”—This is the language of the thoughtless or the profane,—of those who care nothing for the sufferings or privations of others, and whose hearts dilate with pleasure only as they themselves succeed in monopolising the blessings of life. It is the language of those, who on most occasions would be found following the example of the Priest and the Levite in our Saviour’s parable—(how pregnant with instruction upon religious toleration

is that parable!!) and who would “pass by on the other side,” to avoid importunity for relief. It cannot be the language of men who feel themselves bound in all things by the eternal obligation “to do unto others whatsoever “we would that they should do unto us.” Such men do not shut their ears against the complaint of their Roman Catholic neighbour: but they contrive to satisfy themselves, they may safely reject his claims. The keeper has come forward, and pronounced him to be a dangerous maniac;—AND UPON THIS SIMPLE AFFIRMATION, THOUSANDS ARE SCARED FROM THE PERFORMANCE OF A SACRED DUTY; QUIETING AT ONCE THEIR FEARS AND THEIR CONSCIENCES, BY THE PERSUASION, THAT CHAINS ARE EFFECTUAL AND NECESSARY FOR HIS RESTRAINT.

We are next to consider then, how far these fears can afford Christian men a just excuse for holding their brethren in the bondage of the present law. The sole reason alleged for the continuance of that law, is the danger likely to arise to the state and the established church from its repeal.—Now fear and danger are relative terms.—As danger is the natural cause for the excitement of fear: so fear is the actuating motive for the avoidance of danger. But we have already seen, that the most rash and unrighteous acts may be committed at the simple instigation of fear: so that, it never can in itself form the ground of excuse for what we do in compliance with even its involuntary suggestions. The propriety of the actuating motive can only be determined by the nature of the exciting cause, compared with our conduct in relation to it. What we have to inquire then is, whether the danger in this case be such, as to justify the means adopted for the purpose of soothing our fears.

Danger then, it will be observed, is either proximate or remote,—manifest or occult,—certain or contingent. Its influence on the mind by no means generally corre-

sponds with its own nature and extent, but is chiefly dependent on the moral and physical constitutions of men. Some yield to the faintest suspicion of the slightest evil :—others require, at least some plausible signs of its certainty or propinquity :—others again, feel no alarm, but on the most distinct perception and soundest conviction of the mischief that is to accrue.

Now, to indulge weak and idle apprehensions, is in itself criminal : and we are bound, as reasonable and responsible beings, to investigate the grounds of any apparent or alleged danger, before we suffer our minds to be influenced by fear.—But if this be our duty previous to a deliberate yielding to the affection, how much more imperative does it become when we are prompted by our fears to do any thing prejudicial to others?—In such a case, we must not only ascertain, with all possible accuracy, the nature and extent of the evil apprehended ;—and satisfy our reason of its inevitable tendency to affect ourselves, before we are entitled to provide for our security.—But having done this, we must also take especial care, that the remedy suggested is alone adequate to its prevention ;—that it inflicts no injury or suffering upon others, more than is absolutely necessary for our own protection.—These are principles which cannot, I conceive, be denied.

It has been made manifest, however, that we are imposing a serious grievance on our Roman Catholic brethren, under the pretext of averting danger from ourselves. It must unquestionably be our duty, then, to show that this danger is such, as to require the measures of extreme severity resorted to for our defence. If we have not assured ourselves of its existence, as well as of the exclusive fitness of the remedy, it is impossible, I conceive, that we can be acquitted of acting without any assignable grounds for our conduct. Sir, I humbly con-



tend, that the danger alleged to exist in the present case, ought to be so far proximate, manifest, and certain, as to satisfy all reasonable minds respecting it: otherwise, it cannot require the measures adopted for our protection, and consequently cannot justify us in a religious view.—I will undertake to prove, then, that it possesses not one of these properties. It is not proximate!—It is not manifest!—It is not certain!

There is no man in England, I believe, wild enough to dread any *immediate* evil upon the removal of the restraints from the Roman Catholics. They would require a long lapse of years, under the most crafty and hostile efforts, to mature their worst designs through means of the law. They must inevitably proceed in the most cautious and circumspect way. They must work their course through sinuous tracks and complicated obstructions, that would infallibly postpone any fatal accomplishment of their purpose to a distant period of time. In Ireland, indeed, where the frenzy of passion rises to its utmost height upon this subject, some may be found frantic enough to view the repeal of the laws as the signal for instant revolution. These melancholy delusions have, however, spread but to a confined extent even there; and they can scarcely have reached a single individual in this island. There is no fear, then, I conclude, of *immediate* danger.

But the absence of this property might not be so detrimental to the plea of justification, were those of *clearness and certainty* strictly ascertained. A remote danger threatening the safety of state and church, might be a reasonable excuse for our defensive measures, were it so manifest and inevitable as to place their necessity beyond dispute. But where are the proofs of its clearness to be found?—Has it ever been traced to its source?—Has it ever been distinctly defined?—Can any man deliberately



affirm that he perceives where it is to arise;—in what way it is to work,—or in what shape it is to appear?—Sir, I have read many publications of similar views with your own. I have read many speeches of the ascendancy party in both Houses of Parliament: and I solemnly protest, they conveyed to my mind no impression whatever, as to the nature of the evils dreaded from emancipation. I could not even discover, that the writers or speakers had themselves the least distinct perception of them.—Vague and general expressions of alarm, with learned and copious dissertations on the dangerous tendency of the Roman Catholic doctrines and faith, make up the sum of all that has been said to tempt us from a plain course of duty. Many minds, no doubt, are excited to a degree of terror by these things, just as the traveller was by the dark features and swarthy complexion of the poor beggar on the highway. But why not set down, in plain and intelligible terms, for the benefit of the reflecting reader, the precise grounds of alarm?—Why not exactly describe the methods by which the Roman Catholics are expected to accomplish their evil designs?—Why not expressly inform us of the channels through which the poison of Popery is to be conveyed for the thorough infection of the British Parliament, when it has once become impregnated with that material?—Why not methodically trace its operations, from the first moment of infusion, till it seizes on the vitals of the legislature, and finally effects the work of destruction?—These, Sir, would be promising subjects for your pen, and might contribute to awaken the torpid feeling that exists in many minds upon the subject.—With the usual vagueness of your party, you protest against the policy of allowing men of adverse principles to legislate for the church.—On the same grounds, the landed proprietors might exclaim against the fundholder and manufacturer, and should be indulged by their ex-

clusion from the House of Commons.—In such a case as this, Sir, I maintain that it is trifling with a sacred obligation, to be satisfied with mere protestations or assertions. We must have proofs of the danger, sufficient to convince every candid mind.—That it is not *manifest* then, is evident from the utter incapability of the alarmists to produce such proofs.

But do we find any better evidence of its *certainty*?—*That* danger cannot be very certain or cogent, which fails to concentrate the minds of all who are concerned, in a similarity of opinion regarding it, as well as in a simultaneous determination to repel it.—But what is the fact?—Among the numerous party of alarmists themselves, the apprehension of it operates in different degrees, and produces various corresponding effects. Some are so terrified, as to consider the present laws an insufficient protection for the church in Ireland.—Many have so subdued their fears, as to express their satisfaction, should things be allowed to remain in their present state.—Numbers again have made further progress in reflection, and avow their readiness to concede what is claimed, if adequate securities could be devised. Thus, then, we see the apprehensions of danger graduating through a regular scale, from a paroxysm of alarm to a quiescent state of caution;—AND THE CHRISTIAN OBLIGATION ADVANCING IN ITS INFLUENCE UPON THE MIND, PRECISELY IN PROPORTION AS THE HUMAN PASSION RECEDES.

This is a most striking fact, and it well deserves the serious attention of religious men.—There is another circumstance in the case, however, even more striking.—A vast portion of the community, equally exposed to the alleged danger, discover no grounds of apprehension whatever. Yet many of these are remarkable for quickness of discernment and strength of understanding, and entertain

a sincere reverence for the Established Church. All that has been said to excite alarm and awaken distrust, falls upon them like a feather on a rock. Their spirits remain undisturbed by the remotest sense of dread. So far from perceiving danger in conciliating the Roman Catholics, they are, on the contrary, filled with apprehension at the resistance of their claims. While others are terrified at the influence of religious doctrines, they are only alarmed at the increase of political discontent. *Their* fears are corroborated too by the evidence of history in all ages, and by the experience of human nature in all sects, parties, and communities of men. They have observed, and are persuaded, that religious zeal subsides, and religious errors are corrected, uniformly under the operation of time and temperate treatment. That, to use the words of Paley, with reference to this question,\* “if Popery and Protestantism were permitted to dwell quietly together, Papists might not become Protestants (for the name is commonly the last thing that is changed), but they would become more enlightened and informed: they would, by little and little, incorporate into their creed many of the tenets of Protestantism, as well as imbibe a portion of its spirit and moderation.”

Arguing from the conduct of men in all times and countries, they are also persuaded that the sense of political wrongs and injuries never dies. That it inflames and foment the angry passions of our nature with increasing bitterness, every hour in which it continues to be felt. That as the knowledge of their power, and desire for political freedom, spread among an aggrieved community, dissatisfaction uniformly increases and expands. That it at length produces some mighty explosion (how often,

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\* Moral Philosophy, Vol. II. page 347. 21st Edition.



alas, too late!) exhibiting the utter insanity of trifling with the desires, and exasperating the passions, of a multitude.

Thus then, we have the Protestant population divided and agitated by contrary fears upon this question. One portion trembling for the repeal of a law, lest the consequences should be fatal to themselves and to society;—the other portion trembling for a continuance of the law, lest the very same consequences should arise from the opposite cause.

Now, it is amazing that these circumstances should have failed in removing the delusion as to danger, from every manly and ingenuous mind.—But this is not all.—There is another fact to be observed, even yet more remarkable.—Numbers of men having gradually subdued their fears, are now making common cause with their former opponents. The accession of strength gained of late years by the Roman Catholics, from the conversion of their Protestant brethren in Ireland, upon this question, is highly instructive.—This conversion has taken place too on the very spot where all the dreaded mischief is to ensue; where Popery is to wield its gigantic arm FOR THE EXTERMINATION OF PROTESTANTISM, AND THE RECOVERY OF THE FORFEITED ESTATES. Several of these persons move in an elevated rank, possess extensive properties, bear exemplary characters, are endowed with shrewd observation, and must be the devoted victims of the expected subversion and spoliation.—ALL OF THEM ARE CONVERSANT WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY, AND ARE WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THE COUNTRY, FOR THE TRANQUILLITY OF WHICH THIS MIGHTY ALARM IS RAISED; AND YET THEY PLEAD FOR EMANCIPATION, AS THE ONLY MEASURE CALCULATED TO SECURE THEIR PROPERTY AND PEACE!!!—Should not their conduct shame us out of our pusillanimous fears?—



Is it to be believed, that we feel a deeper interest in the question than such men as these?—Are we to set up our apprehension for their safety, against their own avowed conviction that no danger exists?—Are we still to be told that prejudices must be respected?—That nothing can be conceded till they are overcome?—This has been stoutly maintained by some of the friends, as well as by the enemies of the cause.—It is marvellous, indeed, to hear in a Christian country, even the honest prejudices of one class, assigned as a reason for protracting the misery and discontent of another.—But let it pass.—The assertion at least proves that prejudices *are* relaxing, and that the cause must eventually succeed. Such is the avowed opinion of many, even of its most inveterate opponents.—Now, Sir, I intreat you to mark the conclusion.—THE FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES MUST SOONER OR LATER EX-TORT, WHAT A RELIGIOUS SENSE OF JUSTICE FAILS IN PER-SUADING US TO GRANT.—THAT WHICH IS DENIED TO DUTY, MUST ULTIMATELY BE YIELDED TO TIME.

Let men of conscientious principles then, seriously meditate on these things.—Let them ask themselves, whether a danger which gradually vanishes from view, as the mind expands upon the subject, be, a rational or proper ground of fear?—Whether, if it was so manifest and urgent, as to call for any strong measures of defence, it would not unquestionably unite all whom it threatens, in the perception of its extent, as well as in the resolution to avert it.

The fair and obvious conclusion at which we arrive from these considerations is, THAT WE ARE GROSSLY VIOLATING AN ACKNOWLEDGED MAXIM OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY, IN ORDER TO CALM OUR GROUNDLESS APPREHENSIONS.—To afford a righteous excuse for our conduct, the evidence of danger should be clear and con-

vincing.—The inadequacy of all other measures on our part to prevent it, should be distinctly ascertained and explained.—In neither case do the exclusionists even pretend to act upon the principles that can alone justify their proceedings in the sight of God.—I leave it to my Christian brethren to consider the awful responsibility they incur, by denying the claim of right and justice, and by imposing pains and penalties upon others, without any substantial and satisfactory grounds.

Nor does the responsibility end here.—The example of such conduct is pregnant with consequences pernicious to the morals of mankind. If the law of expediency is to be substituted for the law of God, by those of the purest church and most enlightened nation, how many thousands may refer to this example, and find shelter for their worst misdoings, under the mantle of Great Britain and her venerable establishment?—Traces of such effects are discernible among us at this very time.—The policy of England in interfering in the concerns of Turkey, has been condemned upon the principle, that it exposes ourselves to a similar interference. The treatment of Ireland is held to be as just a cause for the interposition of a foreign power, as the treatment of Greece.—The argument has been maintained too by many who are utterly insensible to the evils inflicted by ourselves. Now, there are various topics of reflection suggested by this simple fact.—First, the involuntary admission of the wrong committed at home, by the parallel drawn between the two cases.—Secondly, the slight impression made upon us by that wrong, from the habit of viewing it through the medium of our own passions and interests.—Thirdly, the countenance afforded by it, even to the most barbarous atrocities of the most tyrannical power upon earth.—It is thus,

that the moral sentiments of men become unconsciously corrupted by overlooking the violations of moral principle.—If we allow ourselves to inflict wrongs, or to deny rights, under the apprehensions of danger and the forebodings of evil, we cannot, indeed, reasonably blame any violence committed by those, who have no true religious light to guide them. Nay, if we are permitted to indulge one passion of human nature to the detriment of our brethren, all our immoral actions may find their excuse in the force of the inward excitement. Every crime and every vice may be palliated, and the whole code of Christian duty be made subservient to the loosest principles and basest practices of mankind.

In offering these arguments to your consideration, Sir, I am aware, that I may have failed in doing adequate justice to their truth. Yet, I cannot relinquish the hope of exciting more attention to the subject, than it has hitherto obtained in a moral and religious view. The course of duty respecting this momentous question, appears to me so plain, I must confess, that I am at a loss to account for the different view taken of it by other minds of purer mould, of far larger comprehension, and of infinitely more extensive learning.—I can only ascribe it, as I have before intimated, to some of those delusions under which we almost universally labour upon peculiar topics. That such delusions do overcome men of undoubted piety, and eminent acquirements, is evident, from the following observations of a distinguished Prelate of our church. In a debate some years ago upon the Catholic question, he is reported to have said,\* “The Protestants “hold their duty to God, as above all others. The

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\* Bishop of London's Speech, on second reading of the Catholic Bill, April, 16. 1821.

“Catholics hold their duty to God, and their duty to their church. Their oath is therefore to be estimated with this reservation: a reservation which, no doubt, they conscientiously make. The abuse of this principle, produced much sophistry in argument, and bad faith in practice. From it he drew one simple conclusion, that no Catholic felt himself bound to observe an engagement at all at variance with the high and primary duty which he owed to the church.”

Now, it appears to me, I must beg leave to say, that this learned Prelate is himself acting on the very principle which he charges the Roman Catholics with being influenced by. The law of Christian equity manifestly requires him to concede their claims.—“The high and primary duty which he owes to the church,” forbids him.—Could any thing but delusion conceal this circumstance from his mind, or dissuade him from doing an act of justice, which, doubtless on all other occasions, he is among the most prompt to perform?—Could any thing else prevent him from seeing, that the effects ascribed by him to the Roman Catholic principle, are also to be found among ourselves?—That “sophistry in argument” may abound in the writings of a Protestant Divine, I have distinctly shown, Sir, I conceive, in my reply to your letters. The fact is, sophistry is employed by men of all sects and parties, and often even unconsciously, when truth fails them in its support. *The Roman Catholics* may resort to it, to explain their *doctrines*.—I wish most sincerely, *we* had no need of it, to defend our *conduct*.—“Bad faith in practice,” I am afraid, is no less common to all descriptions and communities of men. The Roman Catholics expressly charge us with the breach of a solemn compact, entered into with them by the Protestant Government of Great Britain and Ireland, at the capitula-



tion of Limerick.\* They also charge us with the infraction of another engagement of a less formal nature, but of more recent date, namely, at the union between England and Ireland.† Every ingenuity has, no doubt, been resorted to, in order to disprove the validity of these

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\* The first article of the treaty of Limerick declares, that the Roman Catholics of the kingdom, "shall enjoy such privileges in the exercise of their religion,—as they did enjoy in the reign of King Charles II.;" and promises, "as soon as their affairs will permit their Majesties to summon a Parliament in this kingdom, to procure the said Roman Catholics such further security in that particular, as may preserve them from any disturbance on account of their said religion." The second article grants certain rights and immunities to those who should "submit to their Majesties obedience,"—"provided that no person whatsoever shall have or enjoy the benefit of this article that shall neglect or refuse to take the oath of allegiance, when thereunto required." The ninth article declares, "the oath to be administered to such Roman Catholics as submit to their Majesties Government shall be the oath aforesaid, and no other." These articles were ratified by the King, and stand exemplified under the great seal of England. The disposition to violate them on the part of the Protestants soon discovered itself. On the very Sunday after the return of the Lords Justices to Dublin, from Limerick, Dr Anthony Dopping, Bishop of Meath, preaching before them, declared that no faith ought to be observed with Papists, and that no manner of respect was due to the articles. Shortly afterwards the English legislature, in direct violation of the first article of the treaty, and in the exercise of an usurped power, passed an act, to "exclude all Roman Catholics from the Irish Parliament."—*Moore's British Revolution.*

† Since these pages have been at press, an Irish Protestant nobleman has drawn the attention of the public to a document confirmatory of this fact, in a speech made by him at a British Roman Catholic meeting.—The opponents of concession, with an unwarrantable disposition to evade the truth, have had recourse to the usual expedient of "sophistry"—and absurd attempts have been made to disprove the authenticity of the document. As some corroboration of the fact, that a distinct pledge was given to the Roman Catholics by Mr Pitt, the author can testify, it was the common and prevailing topic of conversation among Protestant circles in Ireland, at the period alluded to.

charges. Men who have no desire to fulfil their engagements, have usually some expedient, for the purpose of quibbling about the terms, when they cannot boldly deny them. “Bad faith in practice,” is commonly the parent of “sophistry in argument.”—Let any honest man, however, peruse the articles of the treaty of Limerick, and say,—what is the obvious interpretation of them.—Let him next turn to the history of the succeeding years, and say,—whether they were not wantonly and grossly violated.

But where, Sir, are all these animosities,—these heart-burnings,—these religious feuds and factions to end, if we, of the purer church, do not yield up some of our apprehensions for the sake of peace? Where are they to end, if we do not sacrifice our prejudices (should they even be *pious* prejudices), upon the altar of Christian charity and conciliation? Is our mighty empire to be eternally agitated by the contending interests of religious sects? Are its councils to be perpetually divided by their conflicting claims?—I shall assume that the Roman Catholics are hostile to our church. Let me respectfully submit to you, then, Sir, as a minister of religion, whether we are bound to be just, and generous, and forgiving, only when it is *satisfactorily proved* that we shall lose nothing by the result? Are we enjoined to refrain from what is grievous to our neighbour, only when we have *distinctly ascertained* the impossibility of their injuring ourselves?—Is this the spirit of the Gospel?—Is this the spirit in which Christ instructed his disciples, when he said,\* “If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to

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\* St Luke, chap. vi. ver. 32.

“them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again?”

Let me presume, Sir, to remind you, that the practice of our social duties was designed to operate in a twofold capacity: that

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“It is twice blessed:  
“It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.”

We have every reason to believe, that the benefits conferred by the exercise of justice, mercy, and forgiveness, were meant to extend much farther than the mere alleviation of our worldly evils, by producing corresponding moral effects upon the heart of the recipient. We are expressly assured, that, if “our enemy hunger, and we feed him; that if he thirst, and we give him drink, we shall, in so doing, heap coals of fire upon his head.”\* This passage has been expounded (and the exposition is beautifully accordant with the spirit of the Gospel) as contemplating the extinction of the angry passions of others, by the exercise of a generous compassion towards them.—The whole experience of human nature demonstrates the truth of the exposition.—The most unrelenting minds are insensibly subdued by the influence of kind and considerate treatment.—Nay, the very beasts of the field are rendered tame and tractable under a similar influence.—Is the Roman Catholic not only lower in the scale of morality than the worshipper of Vishnu, or the disciple of Confucius, but even more degraded in his affections than the creatures of mere animal instinct?—I protest, Sir, when I see the bitter and scornful spirit

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\* Romans, chap. xii. ver. 20.

which daily vents itself on the Irish Catholics, I am involuntarily tempted to inquire, to what order of beings they belong, or whether they are formed after the image of their Maker, as ourselves.

Granting, however, that they are moulded of baser materials, and void of the ordinary affections of humanity, is it not clear, that by inflaming their passions, we expose ourselves to corresponding danger?—If we leave the tiger to slumber in his lair, we may escape without molestation. But if we rouse him to the combat, the fury of the encounter must be in proportion to the ferocity of his nature.—Five or six millions of men in Ireland are placed in a position of evil, from which they avow their determination to be freed.—Their passions swell with every repeated disappointment.—Their clamour rises at every successive defeat.—Can we wonder at this?—It is the natural and universal result of failing to obtain, by just and temperate means, what justice demands. There is no instance in history, where powerful communities have stifled the desire, once ardently felt and expressed, for what they deem to be their right.—No instance, where their resolution to obtain it, has not ultimately succeeded in spite of every obstruction.

Here, then, is the real source of danger; a danger not perhaps immediate, but plainly discoverable, even to many who pertinaciously resist concession. Some of these satisfy themselves with the comfortable reflection, “that things will last long enough for them.”—Others court its approach, in the meritorious anticipation of hunting down the “Irish Papists,” and settling the question, as they hope, by the effusion of blood. Both these classes of opponents, Sir, are much more numerous in Ireland than you would willingly believe; and the conscientious exclusionist is, in truth, but an instrument in the hands of the crafty and the wicked, for the vilest purposes that can



disgrace mankind. Yet in spite of the growing power and discontent of Ireland:—in spite of the increasing consolidation of its strength:—in spite of the failure of all attempts to break its bond of association, and to suppress its swelling spirit by law,—thousands of the good and the honest continue to behold the prospect from this quarter without emotion, while they are agitated by some indescribable terrors, lest a few Roman Catholic legislators should overturn the Protestant church.

Sir, we confidently believe the doctrines and principles of our church to be founded on the truth of the Gospel.—We as stedfastly believe its forms and discipline to be derived from the pure standards of primitive Christianity.—To entertain apprehension for its *spiritual* interests, then, is plainly inconsistent with a belief in its scriptural foundation.—So that it is only for its *temporal* possessions, and its alliance with the state, that any fear can be indulged.—Let us avoid the anticipated evil, then, by pursuing the plain course of Christian justice,—by abstaining from all equivocal methods of protecting our interests,—by conciliating the good will of all denominations of Christians,—and by relinquishing all unnecessary measures that have a natural tendency to excite their jealousy or wound their pride.—These are the only safe and sound, because they are the only true and righteous principles which can actuate us.—Having done all that is required of us by duty, we may stand fast without fear or trembling, in the conscious approbation of our own hearts, and in the grateful persuasion, that the Almighty will be our defender, as he has been our guide.

I am well aware, Sir, that human diligence and vigilance are the appointed means for protecting our religious as well as our civil institutions. But the concession of the Catholic claims, surely implies no relaxation of our care for the established church.—Must we conjure up to

our fancies every fearful contrivance of mischief on the part of our supposed enemies, without being able to devise one solitary expedient for protecting ourselves?—Are there no means that enable justice, truth, and clemency, to triumph over bigotry, enmity, and craft?—If we cannot encourage a faint hope of inspiring our foes with gratitude for our generosity, how can we cherish the most distant expectation of quelling their turbulence by our oppression?

Let us no longer, then, deride the warning addressed to every reflecting mind, by the natural discontent of an exasperated people. To *scorn* a powerful community is no proof of wisdom.—To *provoke* one, seems little else than insanity. Yet, if we are to judge by the expression of feeling in Ireland, we are going far to inflame a spirit in that country, which no benevolent mind can contemplate without dismay. The following extract is from a Dublin Journal, notoriously the organ of the Roman Catholic party. It appeared shortly after the unfortunate decision on their question in the last Session of Parliament, and affords ample proof of the determined spirit of resistance with which that decision was met.—“The church established by law,” says the writer, “has not only taken a lead, but has been foremost in its opposition to the Catholic claims. There is not a bishop, dean, or parson, with some half dozen exceptions, who did not declare against the country. Now, against that church as a *temporality*, the whole energies of the country must and ought to be directed. The church has sworn eternal enmity against the Catholics. The Catholics must put an oath in heaven against the church.”

Here then, the cause and the effect are fairly placed before us! The inveterate harshness of the church provokes the determined vengeance of the Catholics.—Are we prepared for this fearful and tremendous issue of things?

—Shall we stake the happiness and lives of thousands on this terrible contest, whatever may be the result?—Are the worst evils apprehended from emancipation, to be compared with what must inevitably happen, should the passions of men, stung by political wrongs, and burning with religious zeal, be once let loose?—Danger on the one hand, it is clear, can only overtake us through means of the law.—If the Roman Catholics are to attain their ends in the legislature, there seems no reason, at least, to dread their doing so at the hazard of human life.—But, on the other hand, we have a scene of warfare and convulsion opening before us, of which no mind can predict the issue, and from which the stoutest heart might recoil.—We may trust, it is true, to the valour of our Protestant arms—we may confide in the spirit of our British troops—we may rely upon the splendour of our Constitution—upon the vigour of our councils—upon the strength and stability of our state.—But “the battle is not always to the strong;” and although these are mighty bulwarks, they will not be less mighty, should concession even ultimately involve us in a desperate conflict.—How much more confidently too might we then trust in them, when we might also trust in the justice of our cause, in the moral rectitude of our conduct, and in the corresponding assurance of divine support.

Sir, this is the language in which we of the clergy are accustomed to address our flocks.—We exhort them to lean less upon their own human resources, and to rely more implicitly upon the care and favour of God;—we recommend them to obey the inflexible laws of justice, love, and forbearance, that they may reap, even in this life, the fruits of their fidelity to the cause of truth. Such of us, at least, who have not yet learned to consider the moral lessons of the Gospel as unbecoming or unprofitable topics of instruction for a Christian pulpit, repeatedly des-



cant upon these subjects, according to the ability we have received.—Why is it, then, that in this case alone, we are to withdraw our confidence from God, and to trust to the rigour of human laws for the protection of the church? —Why is it, that the rule of Christian equity must bind us in the daily transactions of individual life, and that we are to deny its obligation, WHERE THE INTERESTS OF A GREAT COMMUNITY ARE CONCERNED, AND WHERE THE HAPPINESS OR MISERY OF MILLIONS DEPENDS ON THE RESULT?

The considerations which I have thus ventured to lay before you, Sir, seem to have been unaccountably overlooked by most of our Protestant brethren. They can only affect the minds of the serious and well disposed, by whom the obligations of Christian morality are duly acknowledged and felt. Much of the opposition of such persons, I am persuaded, has arisen from various delusions on the subject, from a natural tenacity of opinions, formed at the earliest period of reflection, and fortified by their imaginary connection with the welfare of the church. —Let me earnestly and respectfully entreat them to examine their motives narrowly.—The spirit of the world, they must be aware, constantly tempts us all to do wrong, under the semblance of right.—While we imagine ourselves actuated solely by a regard for true religion, how often are we secretly moved by the mere instigation of pride or vanity—the passion for ascendancy or superiority—the respect for names and authorities—the attachment to party interests and party engagements?—Were the opponents of this great cause strictly to analyse their fears, the very best and wisest of them might probably trace them to an unsuspected source.—They might find them identified with a latent reluctance to quit what they have long and dearly prized—with a lurking dread of parting from the fond pre-eminence of power—the love of which, even if it implies but the power of doing wrong—the power of subduing



others to our will—the power of mortifying that very pride in them, which we exultingly indulge in ourselves—is nevertheless a strong propensity of our fallen nature, and clings to us often, under all the pretences by which we endeavour to conceal it from our hearts.

I must now, Sir, conclude; and in doing so, permit me to express my earnest hope, that nothing may be found in these pages, to reflect discredit on the great cause to which they are dedicated, or to imply the slightest intentional offence towards you.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your very obedient humble Servant,

CLERICUS.

*February 1. 1828.*





